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Bhagwan

Neminath



BHAGWAN NEMINATH

Bhagwan Neminath (Arishtanemi), the 22nd Jain Tirthankar of this cycle of time, was born to Queen Shivadevi, the wife of King Samudravijai, the Yadav king of Soriyapur. Vasudev was Samudravijai's younger brother. His two wives Rohini and Devki gave birth to Baldev Balram and Vaasudev Shrikrishna respectively. These three great Yadavs of that era, with their divine deeds, added to the glory of the Harivamsh clan and also became instrumental in propagating Dharm throughout the expanse of India.

Bhagwan Neminath had a unique combination of exemplary courage and valor as well as extreme compassion. His life was free of attachments and vices. It was as untainted as a lotus flower. His conduct was universally beneficent as if it was the Ganges of compassion and Ahimsa. Freeing the Yadav clan of its vices of hunting and consuming meat and alcohol to accept the pious way of life was one of his memorable achievements. He bolstered his message of vegetarianism and universal clemency by his own conduct of self-sacrifice. Vaasudev Shrikrishna assisted him in spreading his message. That is the reason that the teachings of Bhagwan Arishtanemi find an important place in the Vedic literature also. In Yajurveda there are Mantras for offerings to him as the originator of the Adhyatma Veda and benefactor of all beings. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has accepted him as a historical figure without any hesitation.

The details about the life of Bhagwan Neminath are available in the Aagam literature, later commentaries, as well as the biographical works. Although there are small variations in some incidents due to sectarian splits, everyone has treated his ideal conduct of Ahimsa and conduct with same respect and fervor. The entwined story of Rajimati has also been presented with equal eloquence. The puritan love of Rajimati has an astonishing inspiring power due to its inherent attributes of sacrifice, asceticism, virtuosity, and sagacity. Here the pious life-story of Bhagwan Neminath is given in brief by Munishri Purnachandra Vijai Ji, the scholarly disciple of Acharyashri Kalapurna Surishvar ji.

—Srichand Surana 'Saras'

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BHAGWAN NEMINATH

On the banks of river Yamuna was a large city named Soriyapur. Two kings of the

Vrishni family of the Harivamsh clan ruled there. The king and queen of the northern part were Samudravijai and Shivadevi. The king of the southern part was Vasudev who had two queens named Rohini and Devki. The son of Rohini was Balram and that of Devki was Shrikrishna.

This story is based on the life of Shrikrishna's cousin Bhagwan Neminath who in his earlier birth did the Bees-sthanak worship and acquired the Tirthankar-gotra-karma. After that he was born as a god in the Aparajit Viman.

One day in the loftiest of Vimans the throne of this pious soul trembled. He saw his future—

Oh! Soon I shall be born on earth as the son of Shivadevi.

He paid homage to the mother.

Mother Shivadevi was sleeping in her palace. The date was Kartik Krishna# thirteenth. At midnight the pious soul descended from the dimension of gods into the womb of Shivadevi. One after another she saw 14 great dreams. She woke up and thought—

Oh! I saw 14 auspicious dreams...!?



Krishna = the dark fortnight of a month.

From the heavens numerous gods and their kings paid homage to Shivadevi—

O blessed mother! You will give birth to the 22nd Tirthankar, Neminath and the light of Dharm will spread throughout the world.

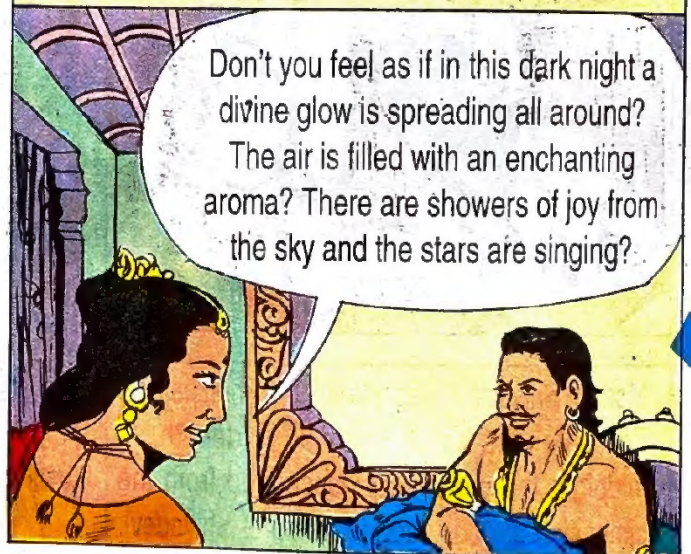


The queen got up and went to King Samudravijai's chamber. The sound of her steps disturbed the king's sleep. He asked—



Darling you! At this unearthly hour!!

Shivadevi detailed her dreams and added—



Don't you feel as if in this dark night a divine glow is spreading all around? The air is filled with an enchanting aroma? There are showers of joy from the sky and the stars are singing?

Samudravijai said—



I am sure you will give birth to that savior of mankind, mere touch of whose feet will liberate the sinners. The earth will be showered by the divine rain of Dharm.



Filled with joy, the queen returned to her room and spent the night chanting Namokar Mantra.

BHAGWAN NEMINATH

After nine months the queen gave birth to a radiant child on Shraavan Sudi# 5th. Every corner of the palace was filled with light. Thousands of gods and goddesses with their 64 kings descended to pay homage to mother Shivadevi.



Indra created an image of the infant and put it near the sleeping mother...



And took the infant to the peak of the Meru mountain. Turning himself into five divine clones, the king of gods performed the birth-ceremony.



On the twelfth day Samudravijai organized a great feast and announced—

When pregnant, his mother, saw in her dream a divine wheel (Nemi) made of Arisht gems. So I give him the name— Arishtanemi.*



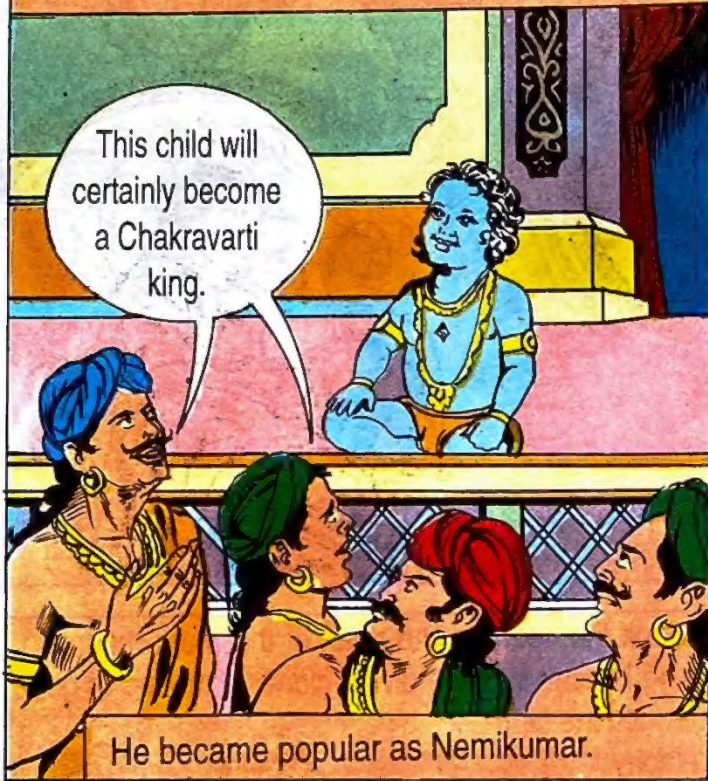
All present there applauded the announcement.

One source mentions that Indra gave him the name Nemi Kumar but as he was an object of reverence (Isht) even to foes (Ari) he became popularly known as Arishtanemi.

* Sudi = the bright half of a month.

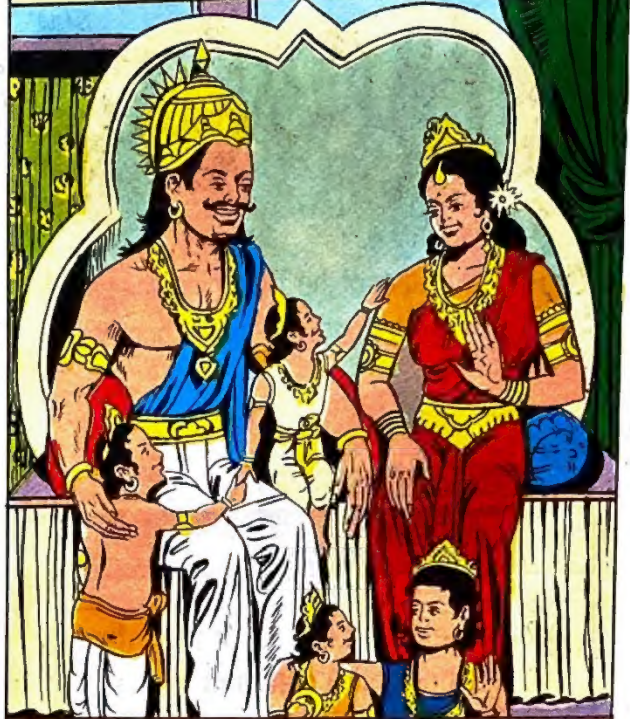
Arishtanemi was a healthy and robust child with greenish blue complexion. When people saw the Srivatsa mark on his chest they commented—

This child will certainly become a Chakravarti king.



He became popular as Nemikumar.

After Nemikumar, Shivadevi gave birth to three more sons. Their names were Rathnemi, Satyanemi, and Dridhnemi.



The four princes were brought up in regal grandeur.

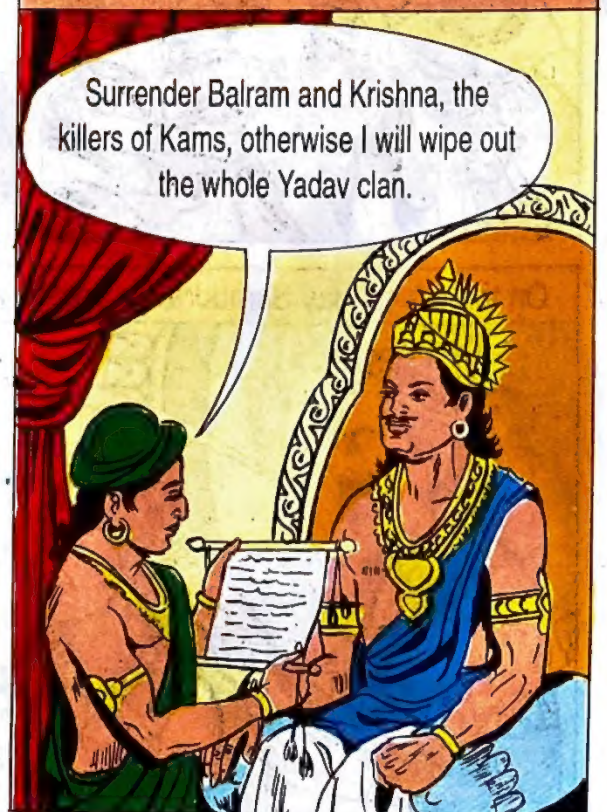
Jarasandh, the cruel ruler of Magadh was a sworn enemy of the Yadavs. When his son-in-law, Kams, was killed by Krishna he vowed before his daughter—

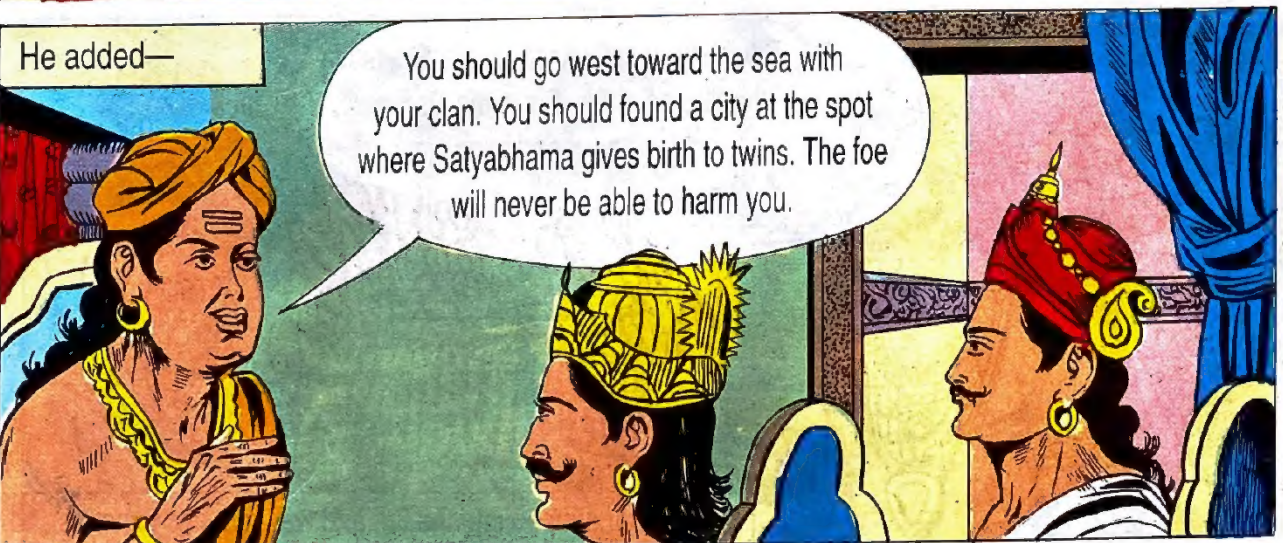
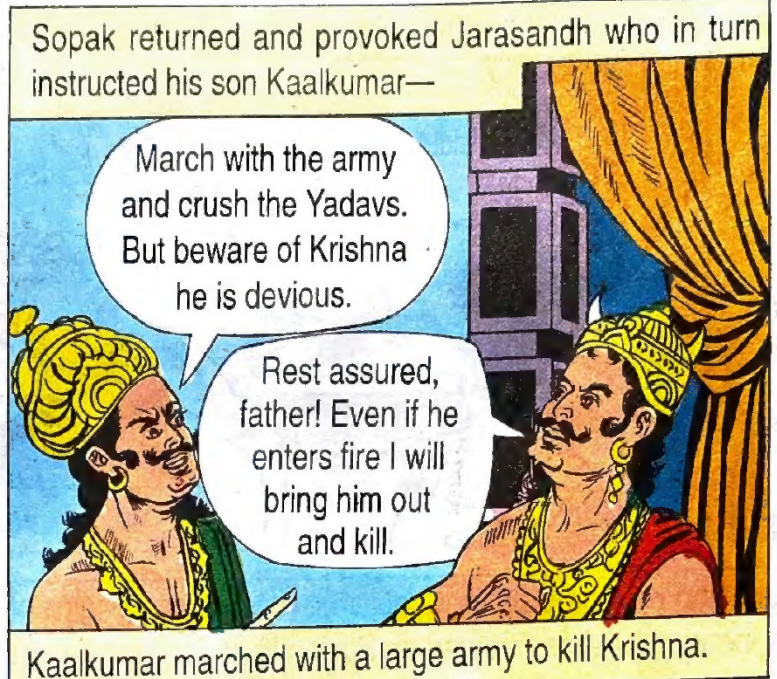
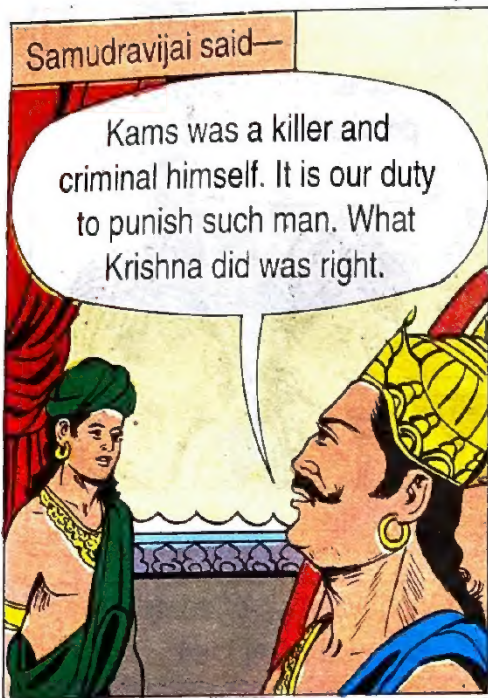
Be patient. I will leave no signs of the killers of your husband.



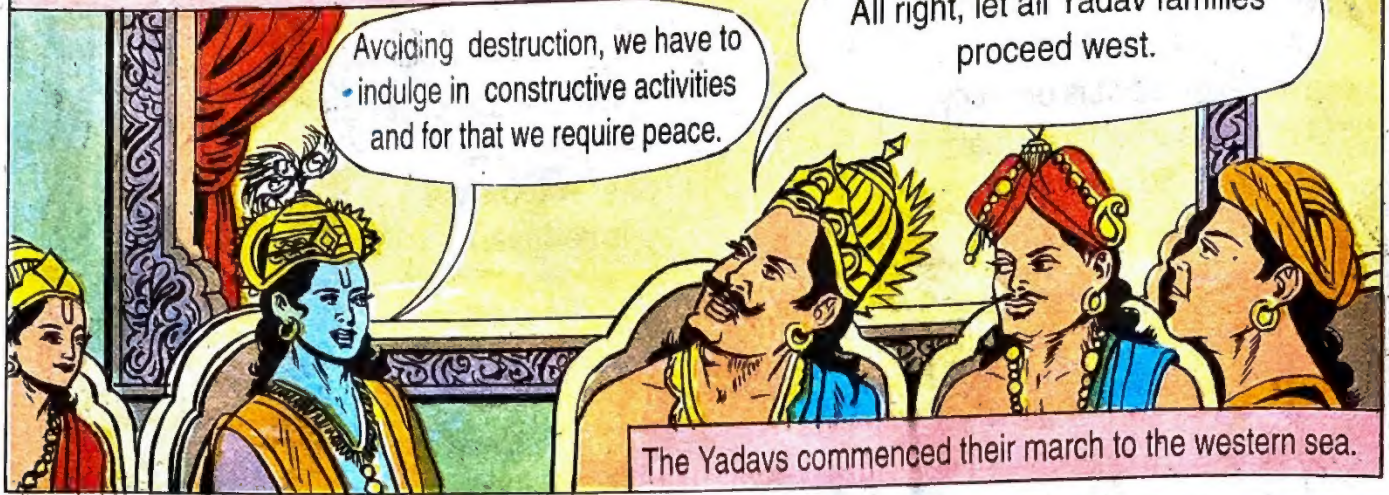
Jarasandh sent his emissary, Sopak, to Samudravijai with a message—

Surrender Balram and Krishna, the killers of Kams, otherwise I will wipe out the whole Yadav clan.





Krishna supported the astrologer—



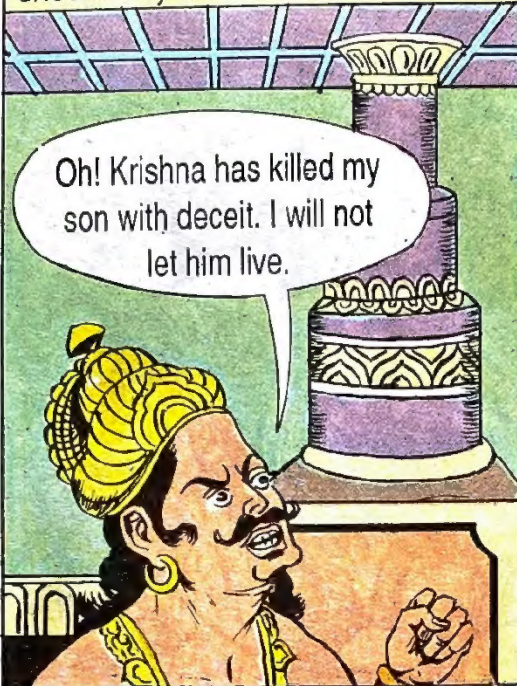
Chasing Krishna-Balram, Kaalkumar reached the jungles of west Vindhyachal. A god, who was a friend of Krishna, created an illusion to end the pursuit. Kaalkumar saw that on the banks of a river were scattered numerous funeral pyres and an old woman was sitting there wailing. He asked—



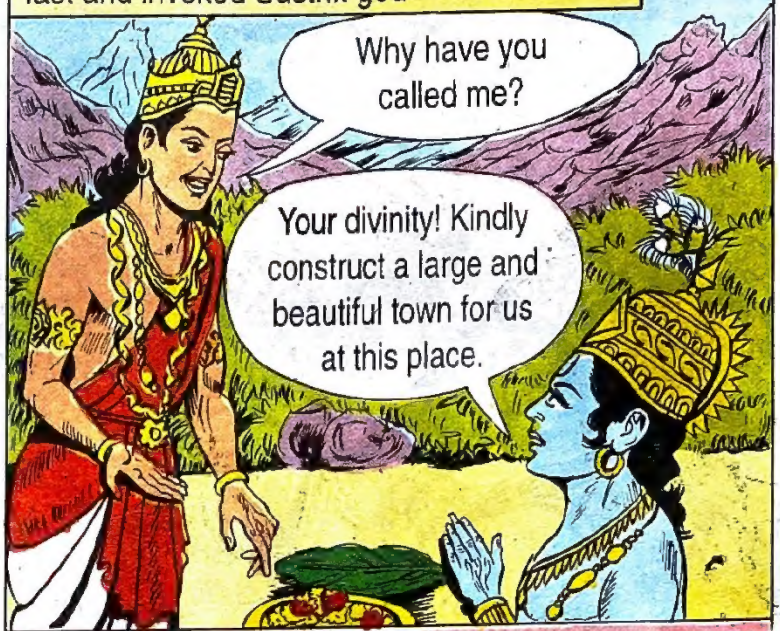
Kaalkumar defiantly said—



After a while the god withdrew the spell. The pyres and the old woman disappeared. Kaalkumar's army returned. Jarasandh was deeply shocked by the news.



Under the leadership of Krishna the Yadavs continued their march and arrived near Raivatak hills. There Satyabhama gave birth to twins. Krishna observed fast and invoked Susthit god—



The god constructed a 9 Yojan broad and 12 Yojan long beautiful city. It became famous as Dwarka.

Later Jarasandh marched to attack Dwarka. Narad brought this news to Krishna who asked Nemikumar—



Riding his chariot Nemikumar also joined Krishna and Balram when they went to war. In the fierce battle Jarasandh hit Balram hard to drop him unconscious. Now Krishna faced the foe. Jarasandh's army surrounded Krishna and declared that he was dead. Panic spread in the Yadav ranks. Before they could retreat, Nemikumar came forward and blew his divine conch-shell.



Infused with joy and renewed courage the Yadavs overwhelmed Jarasandh's army.

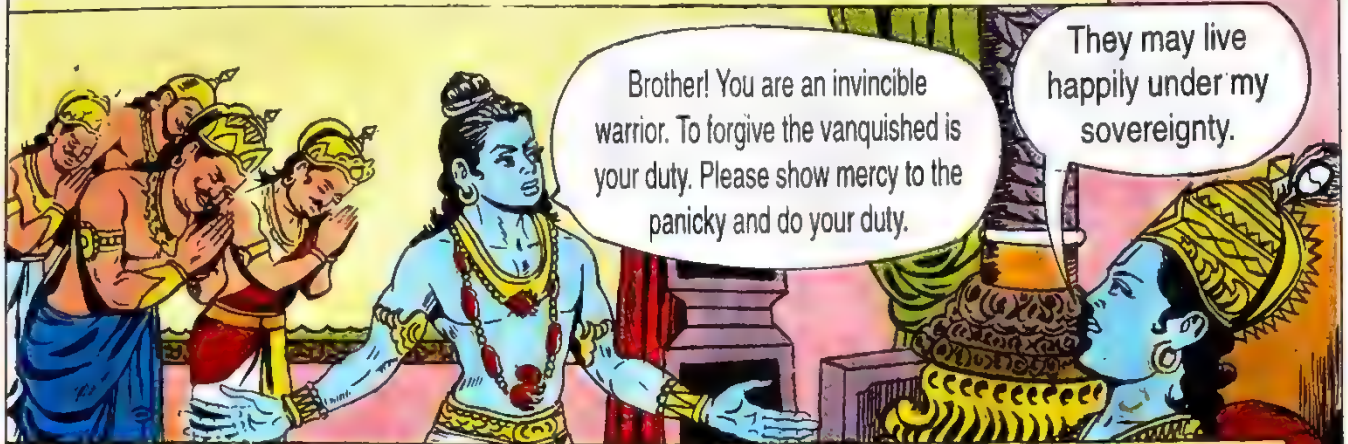
Krishna whirled his Chakra # and launched it at Jarasandh. When he saw the fearsome Chakra, Jarasandh fled.



The Chakra chased him like a guided missile and at last beheaded him. The gods showered flowers on Krishna and announced—



Jarasandh dead, all his allies rushed to Nemikumar in panic. He approached Krishna with them and the sons of Jarasandh.



Brother! You are an invincible warrior. To forgive the vanquished is your duty. Please show mercy to the panicky and do your duty.

They may live happily under my sovereignty.

On Nemikumar's request Krishna forgave them. The Yadavs lived happily in Dwarka.

Nemikumar was a young man now. One day he wandered into the armory of Vaasudev Shrikrishna and playfully started examining various weapons. The guard said—



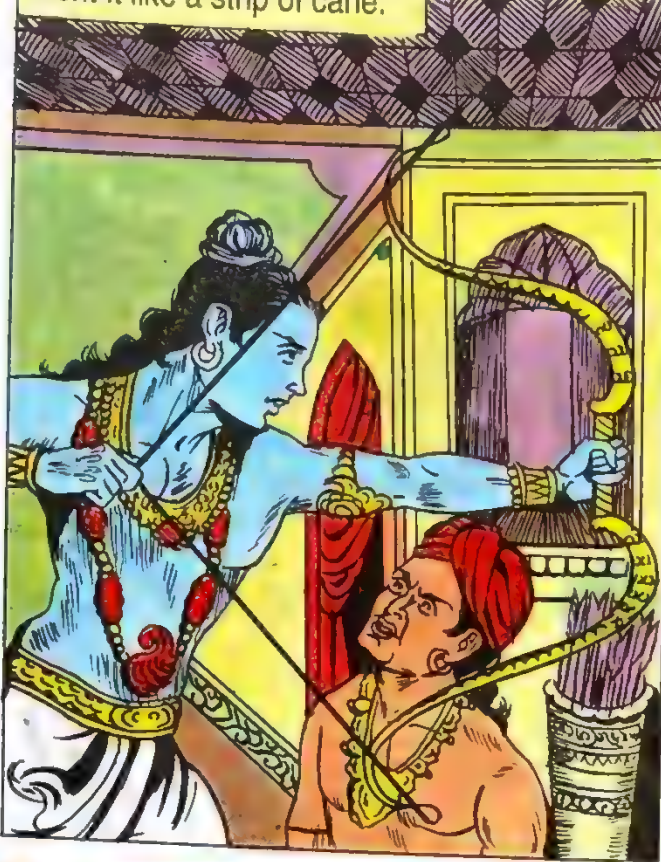
Prince! Besides Krishna no one has the strength even to lift these weapons.

Nemikumar smiled, took the Chakra in his index finger and whirled it with great speed. The guard looked agape—



What is this? Is he stronger than Krishna?

Nemikumar then lifted the Sharng bow and bent it like a strip of cane.



He also picked the Panchjanya Conch up and blew it. Its deafening sound spread far in all directions.



Sitting in his court, Krishna was taken aback. He rushed to his armory and asked—



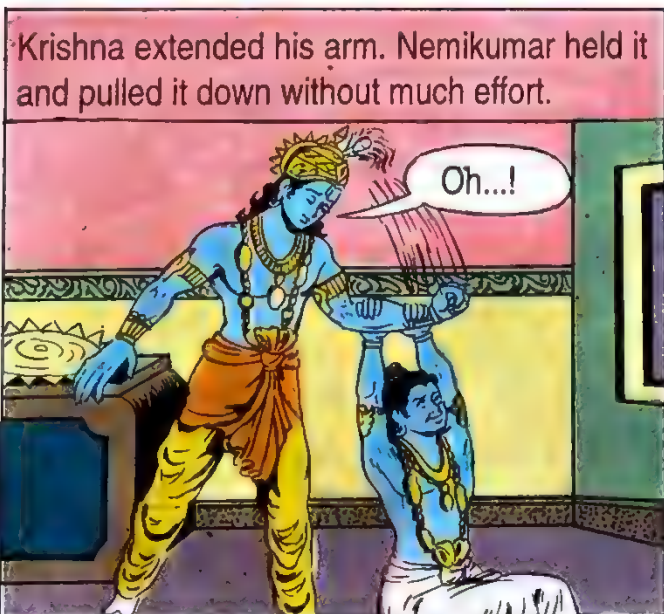
Prince! Who blew this Conch?

I picked your conch playfully and blew it. But why are you so concerned?

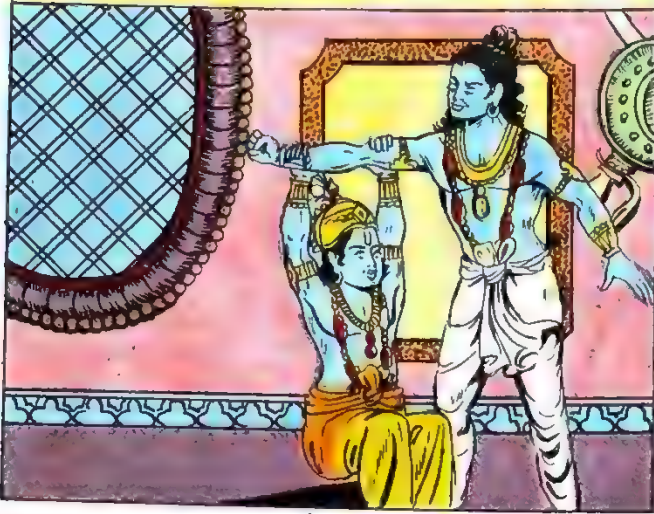
Krishna embraced Nemikumar and said laughing—



What a surprise! You blew this Conch. It means that my brother is more powerful than me.



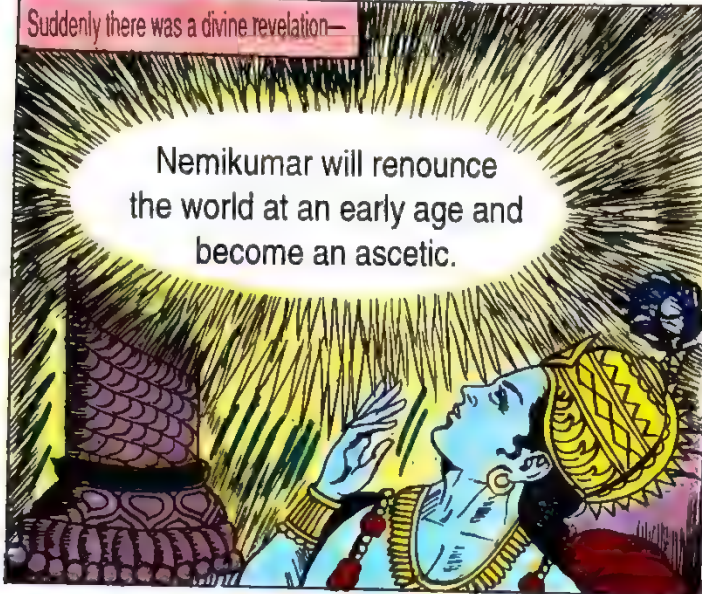
Krishna held the extended arm and suspended all his weight but it remained rigid like an iron rod.



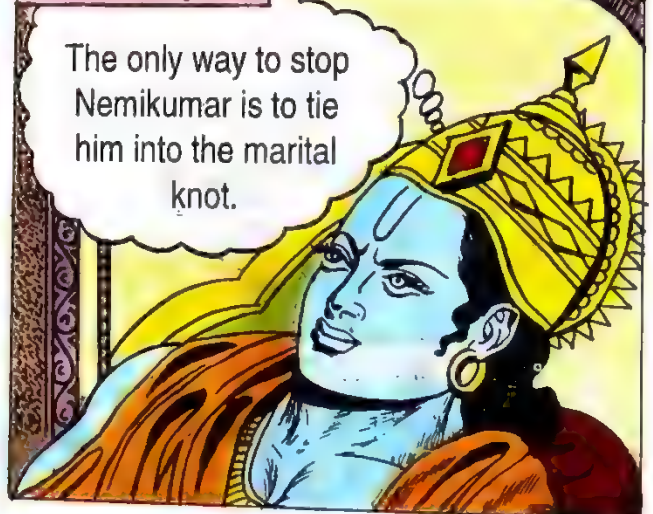
Krishna became apprehensive—



Suddenly there was a divine revelation—



This turned the direction of Krishna's stream of thoughts—



Finding an opportunity Krishna said—

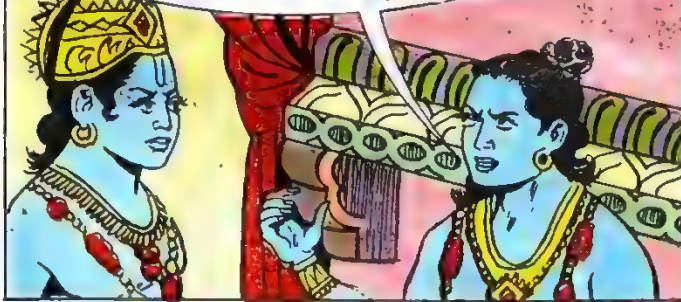


Krishna persuaded—



Nemikumar said—

Brother! Mundane indulgence attracts him who is fond of pleasures. But to a detached soul these pleasures are bitter as poison; for him they are like shackles in a prison.



Krishna—

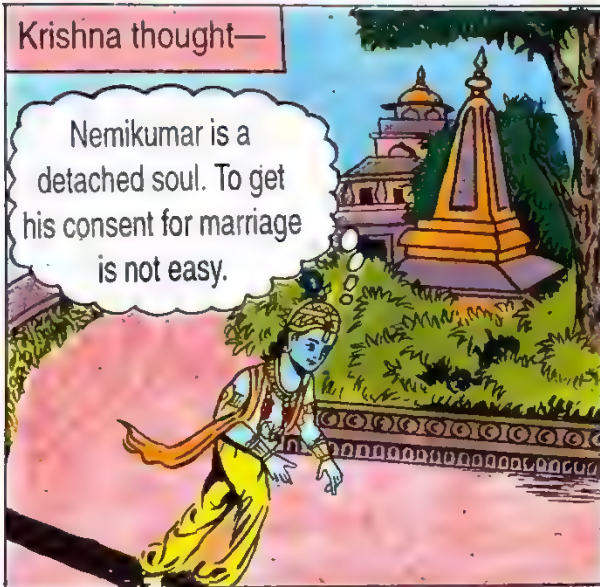
Prince! I have chosen the most beautiful woman in the world for you so that you may intensely enjoy your married life.

Brother! The union of two bodies is a source of fleeting joy and lasting pain. I want to tread the path that offers the lasting bliss.



Krishna thought—

Nemikumar is a detached soul. To get his consent for marriage is not easy.



Pondering thus Krishna returned to his palace. Satyabhama and Rukmini asked—

My lord! You look worried. What is the matter?



Krishna smiled and said—

Uncle Samudravijai and other elders want that Nemikumar should get married but he does not agree.



Satyabhama laughed and said—

Leave this to us. When Nemikumar beholds the enchanting beauty of my younger sister, Rajimati, he will at once agree.



One day, during the spring time, Krishna and Nemikumar along with Krishna's wives went for water-games. With pumps in their hands, Satyabhama and Rukmini sprayed the saffron water from the pool over Nemikumar. Jambavati and Padmavati made flower-balls and threw at him with force. Nemikumar joined the play with a mock protest—



Nemikumar responded with laughter

Bhabhi = elder brother's wife.

* Devarani = husband's younger brother's wife.

The queens took Nemikumar's laughter as his consent for marriage. They shouted with joy—

Cheers! Our Devar# has agreed to marry!!

Now I will get an excellent princess for him.

Nemikumar thought—

Strange are the ways of fondness. To me marriage is a shackle and they take it to be a source of happiness and want to yoke me.

Next day Krishna approached King Ugrasen with the marriage proposal of Nemikumar—

I seek the hand of princess Rajimati in marriage for Nemikumar.

There can be no greater happiness than this. I beseech you to come with the bridegroom in a gorgeous marriage procession.

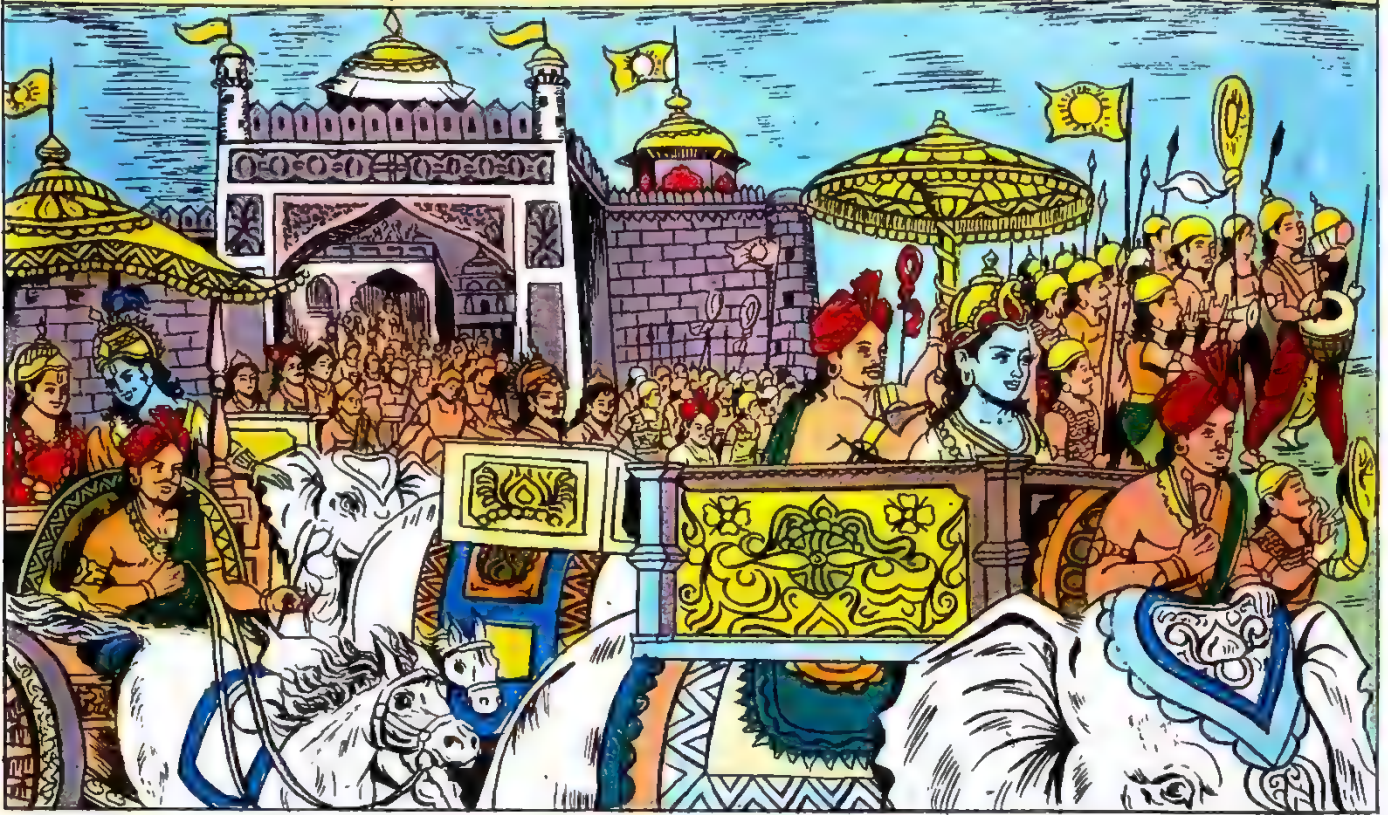
Krishna—

I am obliged. Please make necessary arrangements.

In Dwarka started the preparations for Nemikumar's marriage.

Devar = husband's younger brother.

Every house in Dwarka was decorated with buntings and lighting. Adorned as a bridegroom, Nemikumar rode Krishna's bull-elephant. The marriage procession included hundreds of Yadavs walking and riding horses and chariots.



Far away on the roof of a large palace on a hilltop, surrounded by the ladies of the royal family, gorgeously dressed bride, Rajimati, stood waiting with a garland in her hands. Two friends of Rajimati commented—



According to the Trishashti Shalaka Purush Charitra Nemikumar rides a chariot and according to Uttaradhyayan Sutra he rides a bull-elephant..

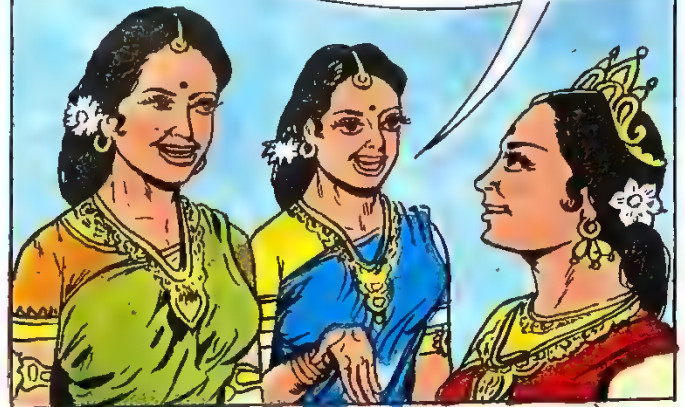
Rajul interrupted—

You are fools! In absence of black, whiteness loses its value. Moreover, gold is tested by rubbing at the black touch-stone.



Both the friends laughed heartily—

In love all spots become beauty spots.



When approaching the place of ceremonies Nemikumar saw a herd of domestic animals and birds in a cordoned area. He also heard their pathetic wailing.

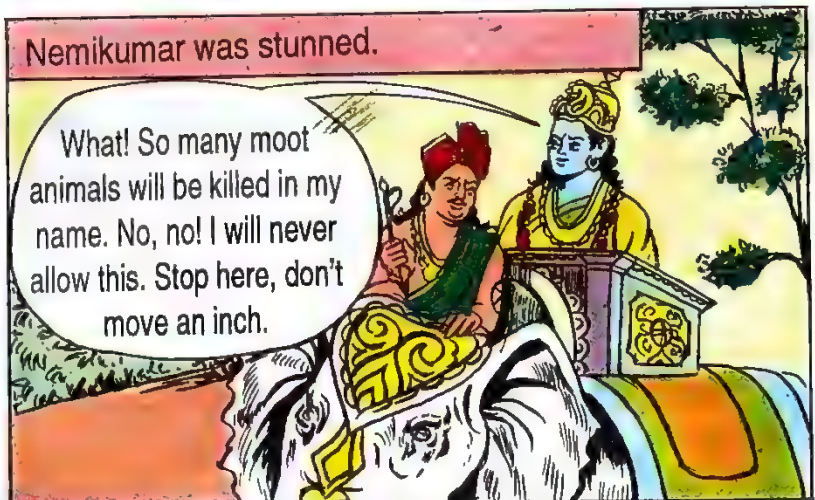


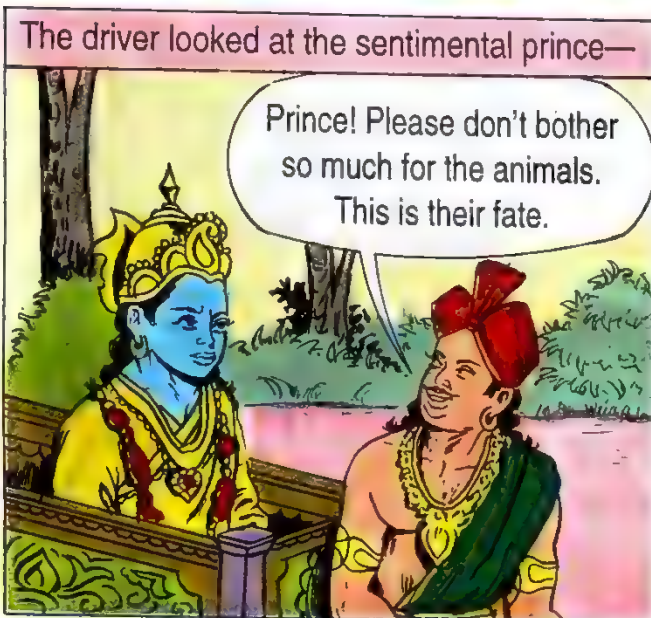
Driver! Why thousands of animals have been caged here? Why are they wailing? This pathetic sound is painful to me.

Prince! These animals will be killed for the feast meant for the guests.

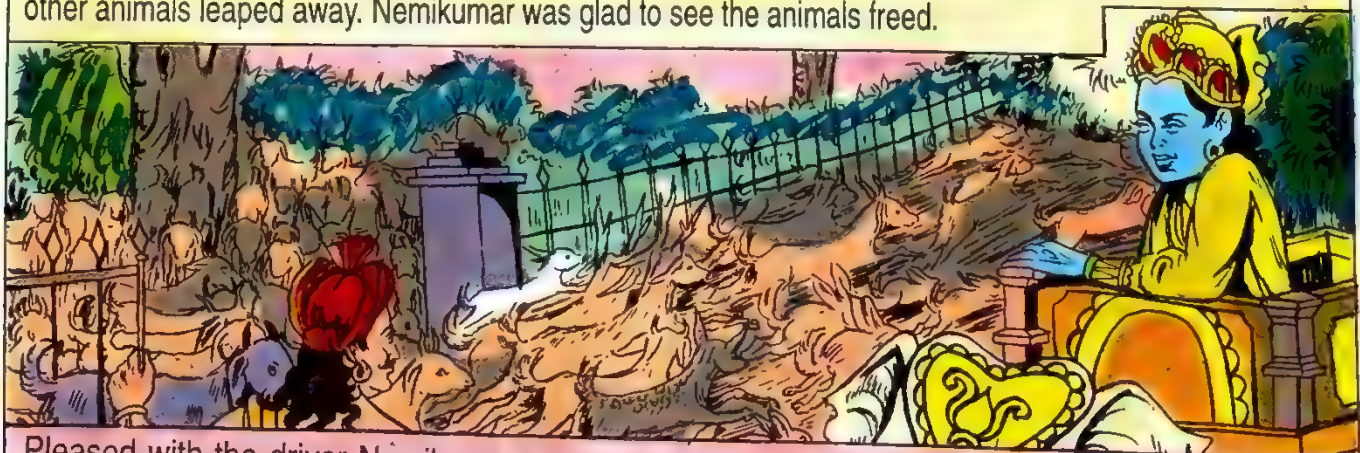
Nemikumar was stunned.

What! So many moot animals will be killed in my name. No, no! I will never allow this. Stop here, don't move an inch.





The driver got down from the elephant and opened the gates of the fence. Deer, sheep, goats, rabbits and other animals leaped away. Nemikumar was glad to see the animals freed.



Pleased with the driver Némikumar gave him all the ornaments on his body and asked him to return to Dwarka.

Seeing the elephant turn back, Samudravijai, Krishna, and others came and asked the driver—



Father! Brother! I am not interested in the marriage that becomes the cause of slaughter of so many moot animals.

The Yadavs tried to dissuade Nemikumar—



Father! One who breaks his resolve is a coward. Besides not getting married, I have also resolved to renounce the world. Please don't try to stop me...



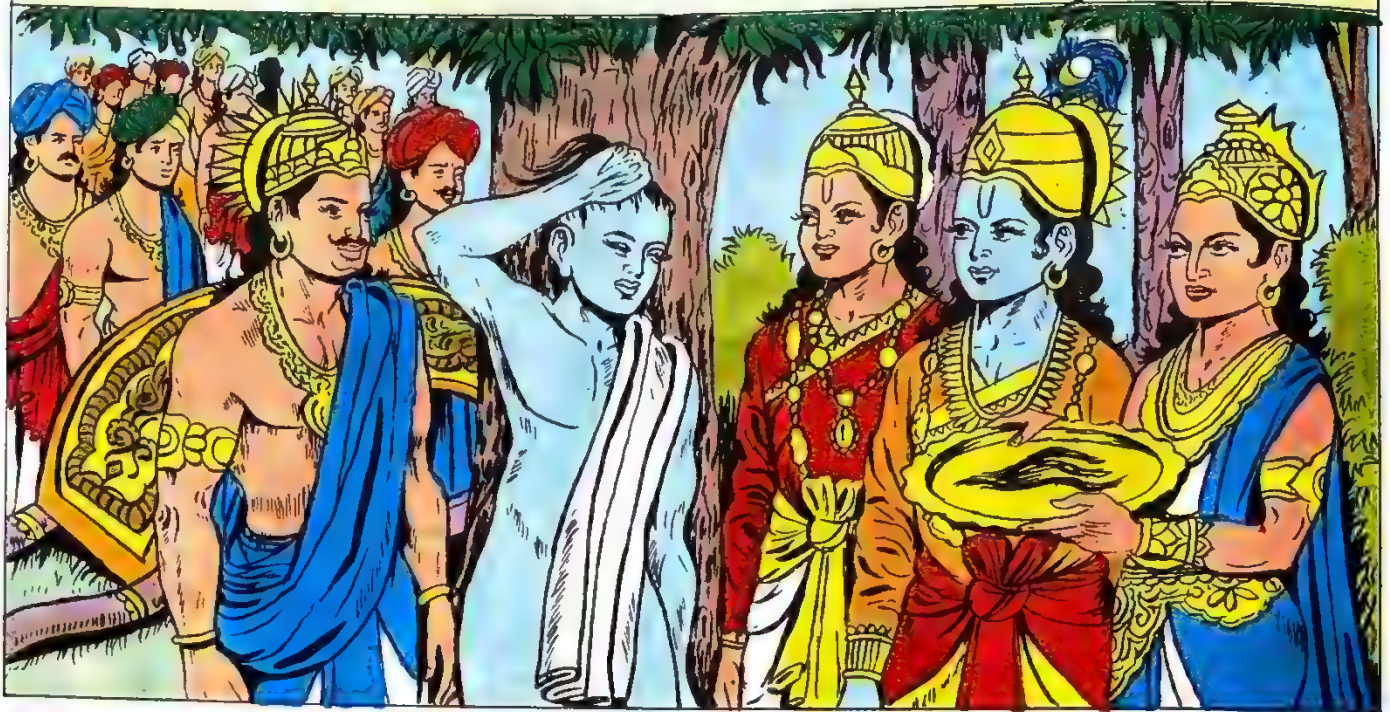
Krishna then explained to the others—



Nemikumar returned to Dwarka and resolved—

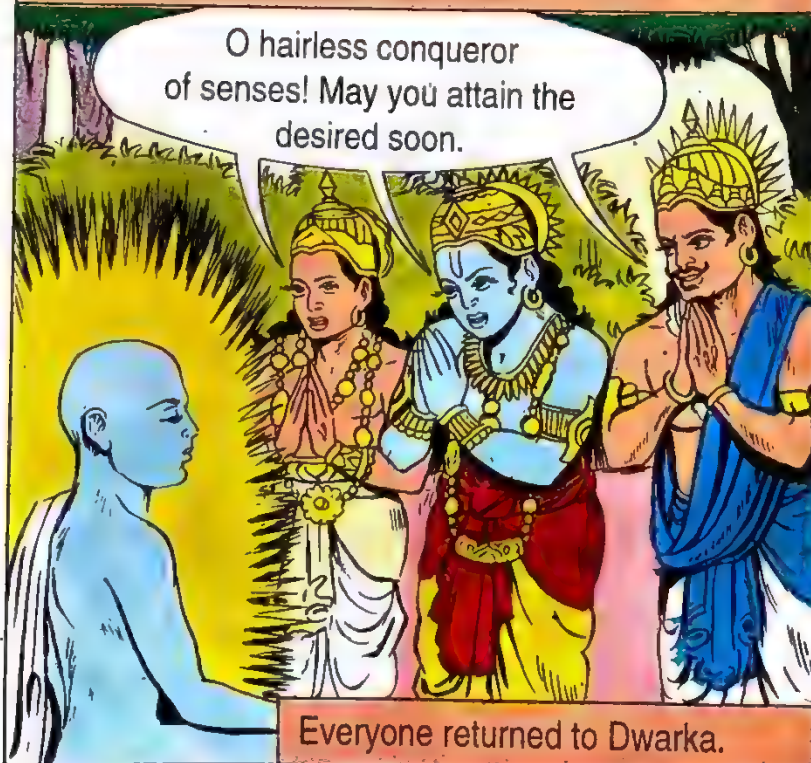


After this he started the year long charity. On Shraavan Sudi 6th in the afternoon, riding the Uttarakuru palanquin he came to the Raivatak garden on the Raivat hill. Under an Ashoka tree he did the five fistful pulling out of his hair and accepted the ascetic code. Indra took his hair in a golden plate and offered him a divine cloth that he put on his shoulders. Along with him one thousand other men also accepted Diksha.



The moment he accepted Diksha, Nemikumar acquired the Manah-paryav-Jnana. Samudravijai, Krishna, and other Yadavs paid homage to Prabhu Neminath.

Wandering around in Saurashtra doing his spiritual practices at various spots, Neminath returned to the same spot after 54 days.



O hairless conqueror of senses! May you attain the desired soon.

Everyone returned to Dwarka.

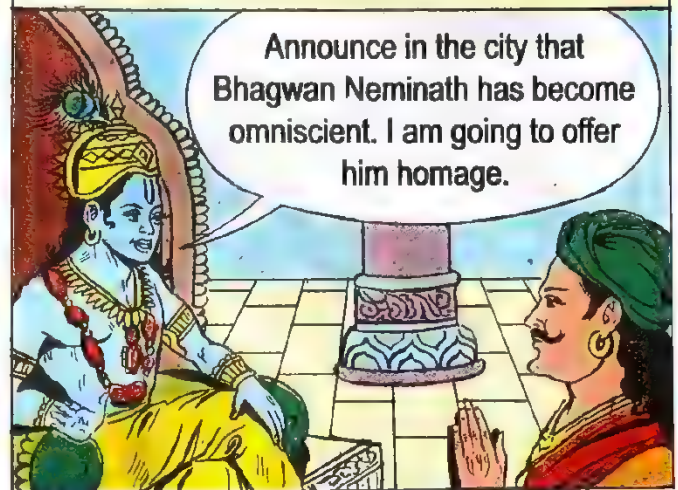


Under the Ashoka tree while doing the purest of spiritual practices Neminath attained Kewal Jnana.

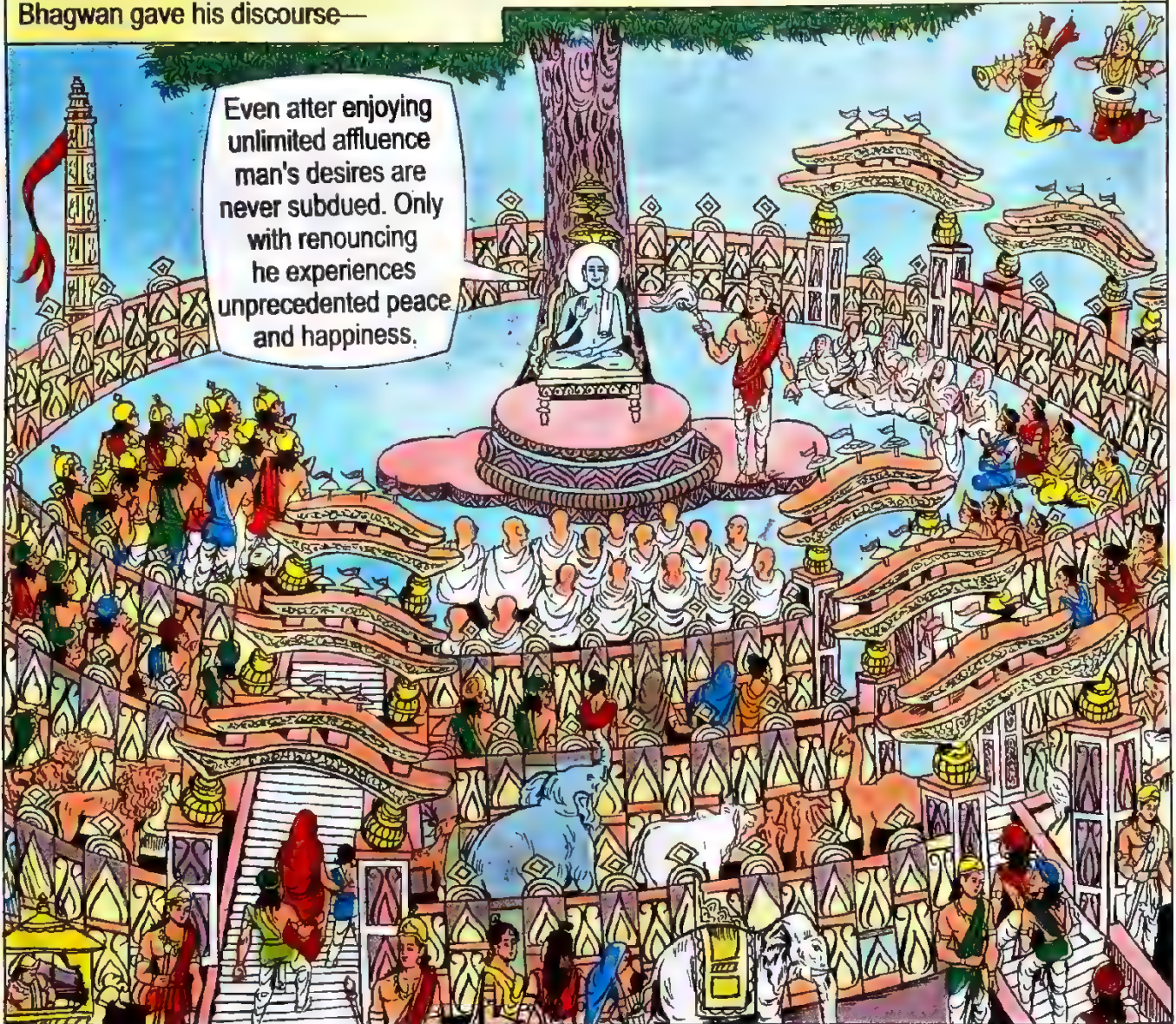
The garden-keeper informed Krishna—



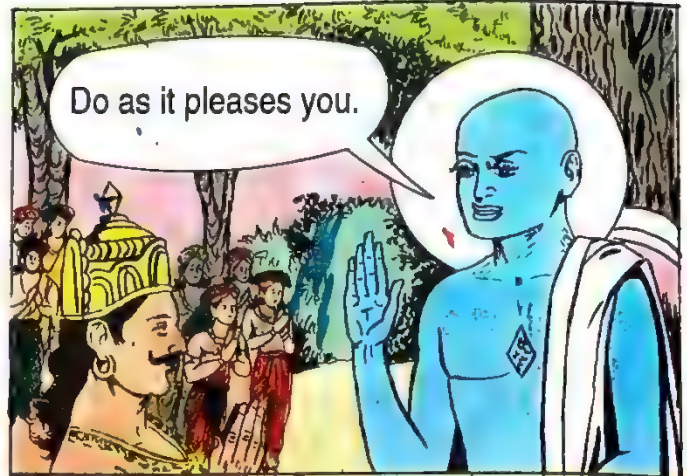
Krishna was glad to hear the news. He rewarded the man and instructed his personal guard—



Krishna, with kings, princes and a multitude of citizens, came and paid homage to Bhagwan Neminath. Bhagwan gave his discourse—

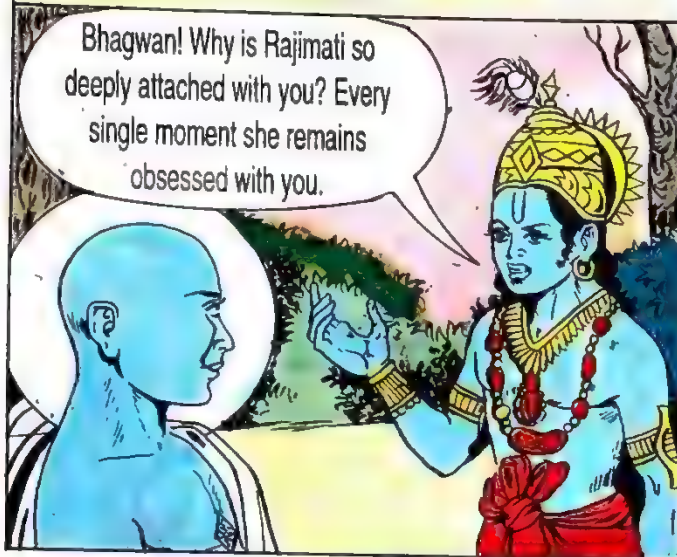


After the discourse King Vardatt appealed—



King Vardatt got initiated along with 1000 others. He became the first Ganadhar# of Bhagwan Neminath.

Vaasudev Krishna asked—



Bhagwan Neminath explained—



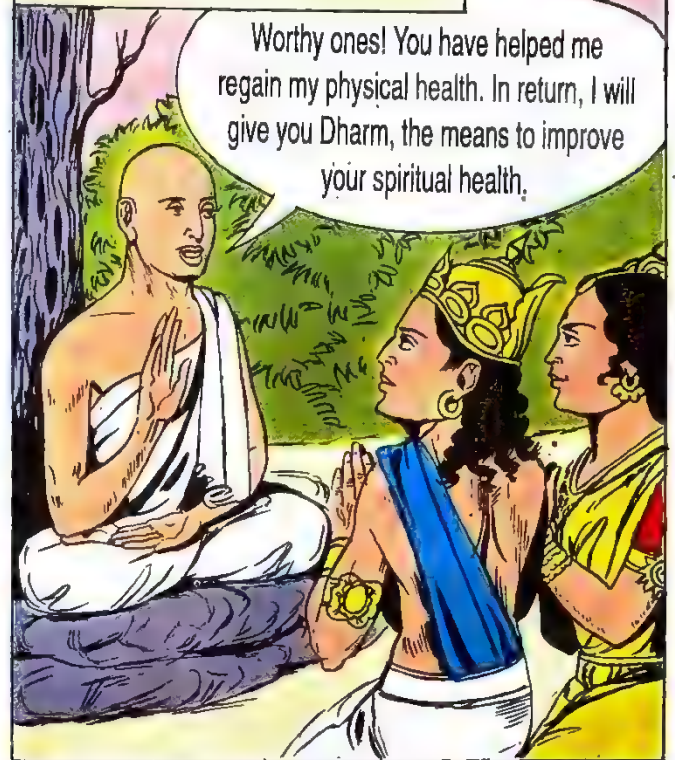
Krishna asked with curiosity—



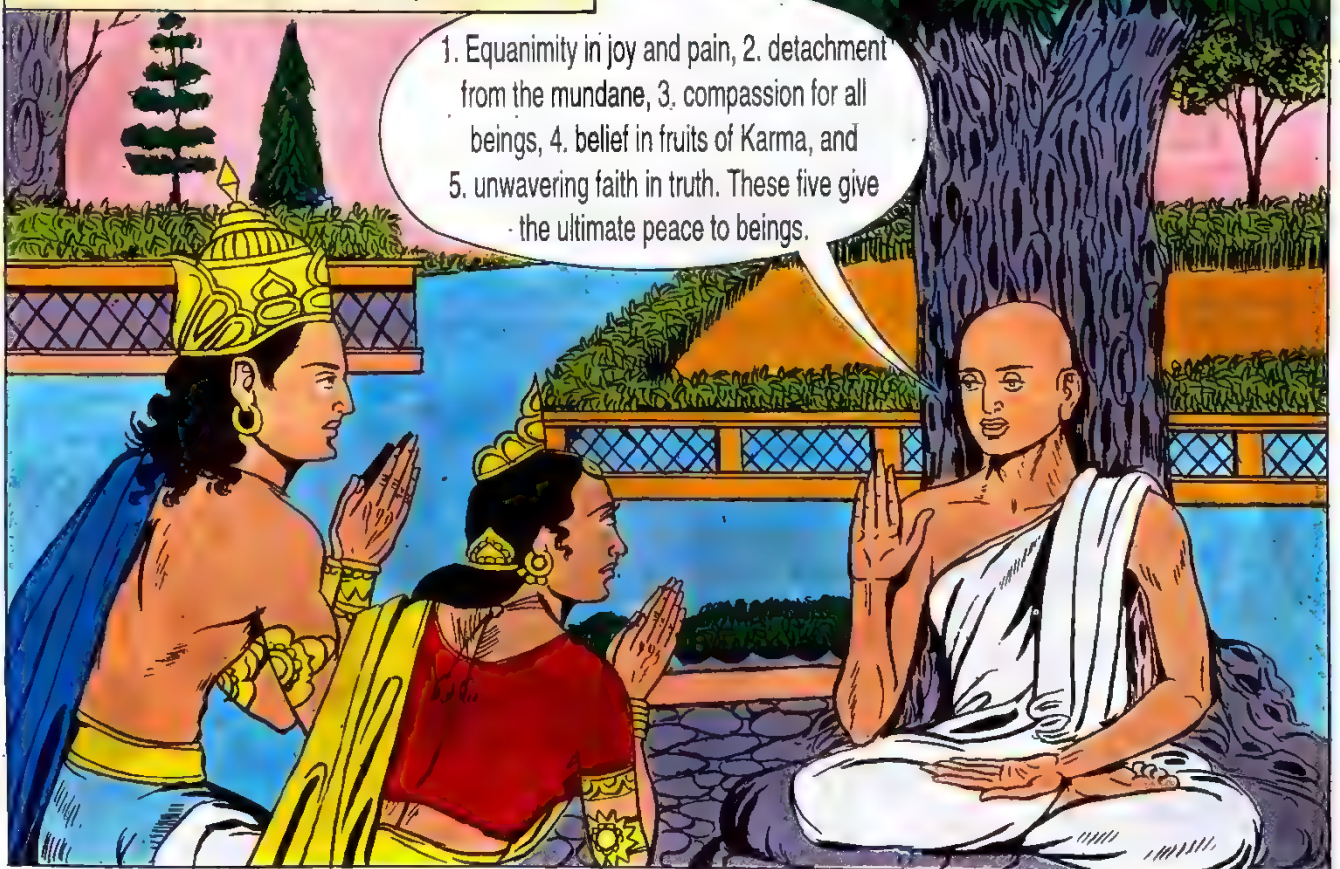
Eight births earlier, there was a prince named Dhankumar. He married Dhanvati, a beautiful and virtuous princess. They deeply loved each other. One day while walking in a garden they saw an unconscious ascetic.



Dhankumar took out thorns from the ascetic's feet and applied medicine. Dhanvati also brought sterile water and other things. On regaining composure the ascetic said—



And he told them the salient points—



They conveyed their faith in the ascetic's words—

Bhagwan! By beholding you and hearing your sermon - we are filled with joy.

The ascetic said—

This enthusiasm for Dharm indicates that your soul has had a whiff of right perception.

After this they both accepted the Shravak Dharm# and returned home.

Bhagwan Neminath continued—

Vaasudev! During the passage of next eight rebirths Dhankumar and Dhanvati did not separate. As friends or as married couple the bond of love kept them together.

Currently Dhankumar reincarnated as Nemikumar and Dhanvati as Rajimati.

Vaasudev Krishna asked—

Bhagwan! You have become detached but Rajimati is yet to rise above her love for you. She repeats your name day and night...

Bhagwan said—

The time has come. She will also get detached and attain Moksh during this life time.

After the discourse, Krishna and other members of royalty returned to Dwarka.

The code of laity.

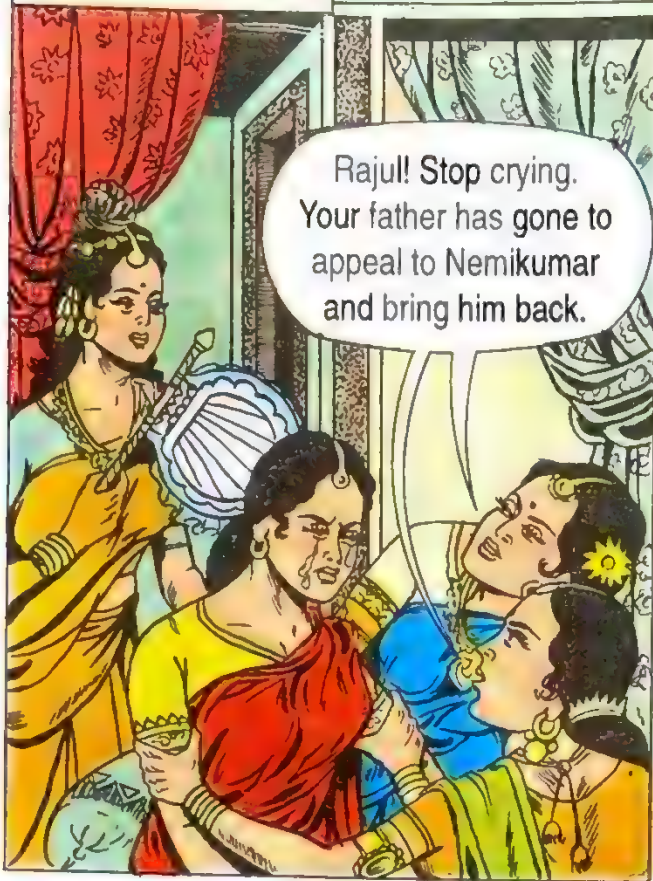
When Rajimati saw the marriage procession returning she asked—



Her friends sprinkled cold water and blew air. When she regained consciousness she threw away her ornaments and other adornments and started acting crazy—



The friends consoled her—



Rajul! Stop crying.
Your father has gone to
appeal to Nemikumar
and bring him back.



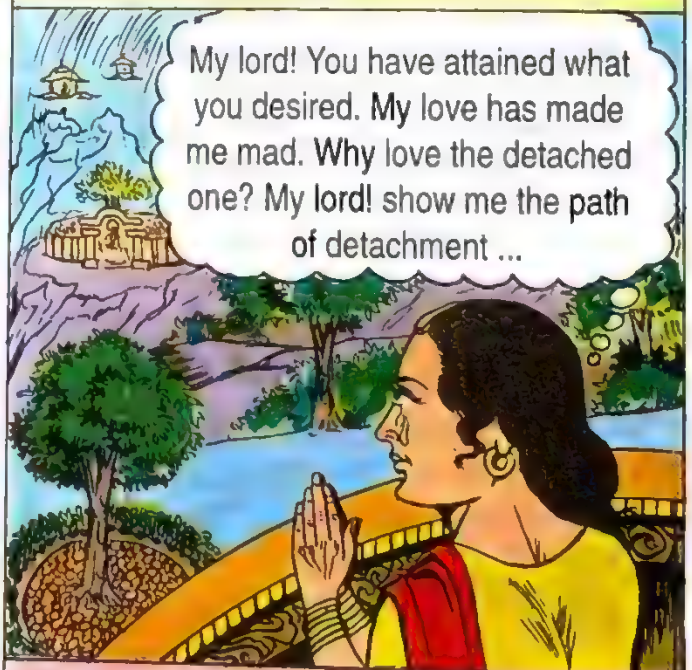
No! He will not come now.....
Please take me to him. I will
appease him. Only I can bring
him back. He will not listen to
anyone but me.

This way Rajul used to sit alone at the
window and stare at the Raivat hill. One day
a friend informed—



Rajul! Your lord is now the
Lord of three worlds. See, gods
come to celebrate his attaining
omniscience.

Rajul felt a unique exhilaration. She offered
salutations to her lord—

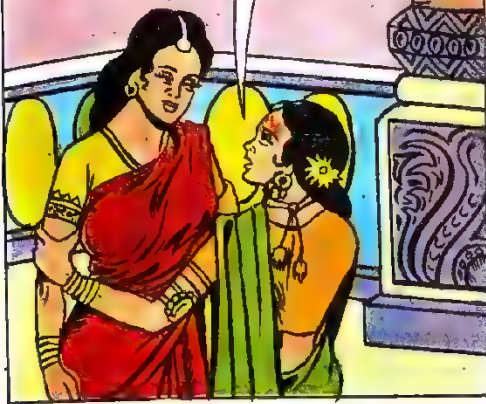


My lord! You have attained what
you desired. My love has made
me mad. Why love the detached
one? My lord! show me the path
of detachment ...

Lost in her sentiments, Rajul joined her palms,
fixed her gaze at the hill and offered prayers.
Tears of joy dropped from her eyes.

The friend shook her—

Rajul! don't be so sentimental. Come, everyone is going to pay homage to Prabhu...



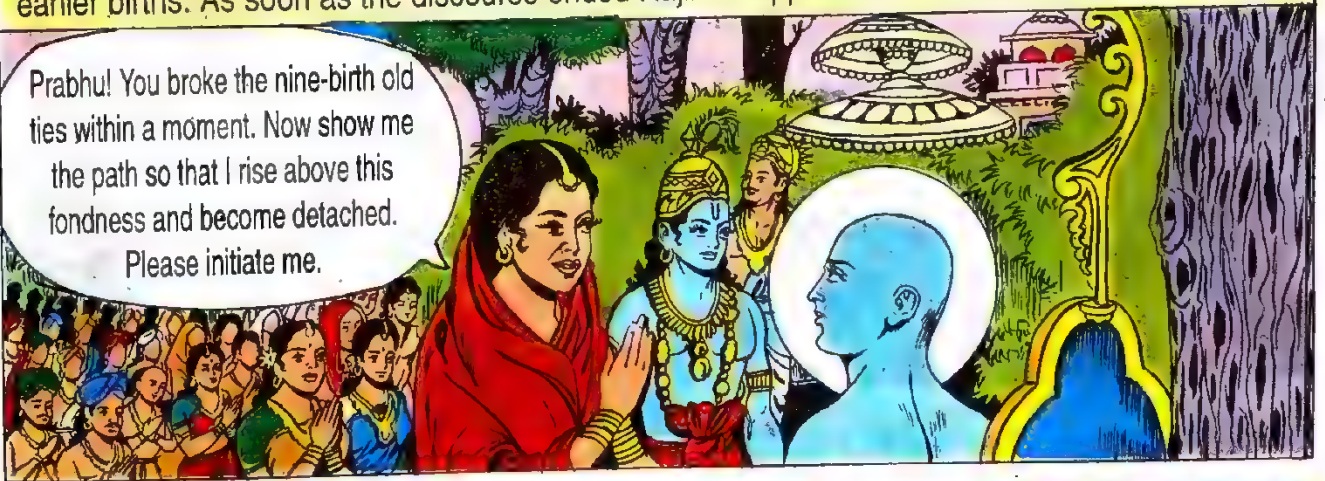
Mad with joy, Rajul joined the family on chariots to go to the Raivat hill. On way she continued to look at the peaks of that hill.



Sitting there, Prabhu must be giving his discourse. Indeed, a blissful experience!

The chariots stopped at the foot of the hill. Like a child Rajul climbed in leaps and bounds. At the peak was the Samavasarn # of Bhagwan Neminath. He was narrating the story of his eight earlier births. As soon as the discourse ended Rajimati approached and submitted—

Prabhu! You broke the nine-birth old ties within a moment. Now show me the path so that I rise above this fondness and become detached. Please initiate me.



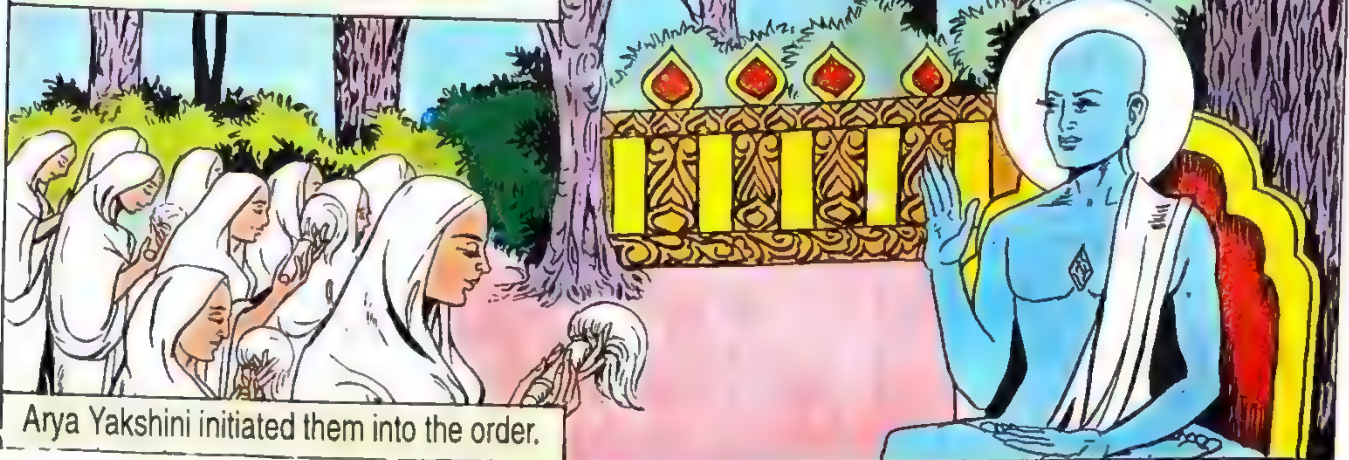
Seeing her inclination toward detachment Krishna and other Yadav elders supported—

Prabhu! She is detached from the mundane world. Please initiate her.



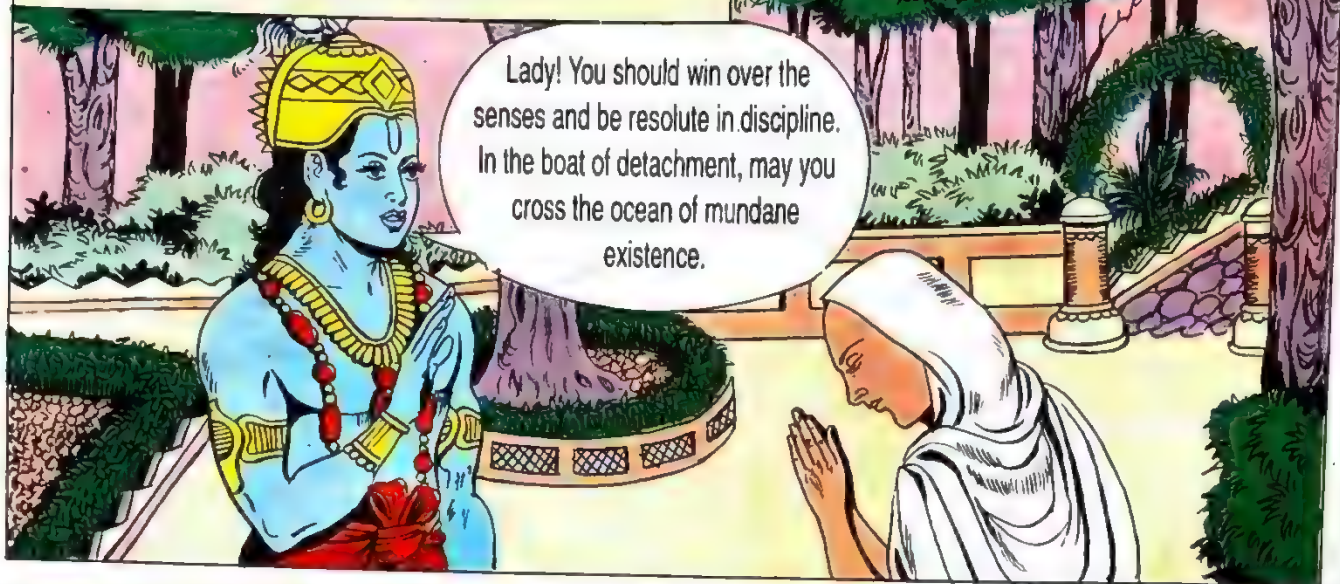
Religious assembly.

When Prabhu gave his consent Krishna arranged the renouncing ceremony. Rajimati pulled out her shining black hair. Clad in white she came to Bhagwan Neminath along with hundreds of other Yadav women for initiation.



Arya Yakshini initiated them into the order.

Krishna was first to wish her success—



Prince Rathnemi also approached Bhagwan—



Prince Rathnemi also became an ascetic and proceeded into the caves to do penance.

Once Rajimati and other ascetics were climbing the Raivat hill to pay homage to Bhagwan Neminath. All of a sudden there was a heavy downpour with thundering dark clouds, lightening and roaring winds.



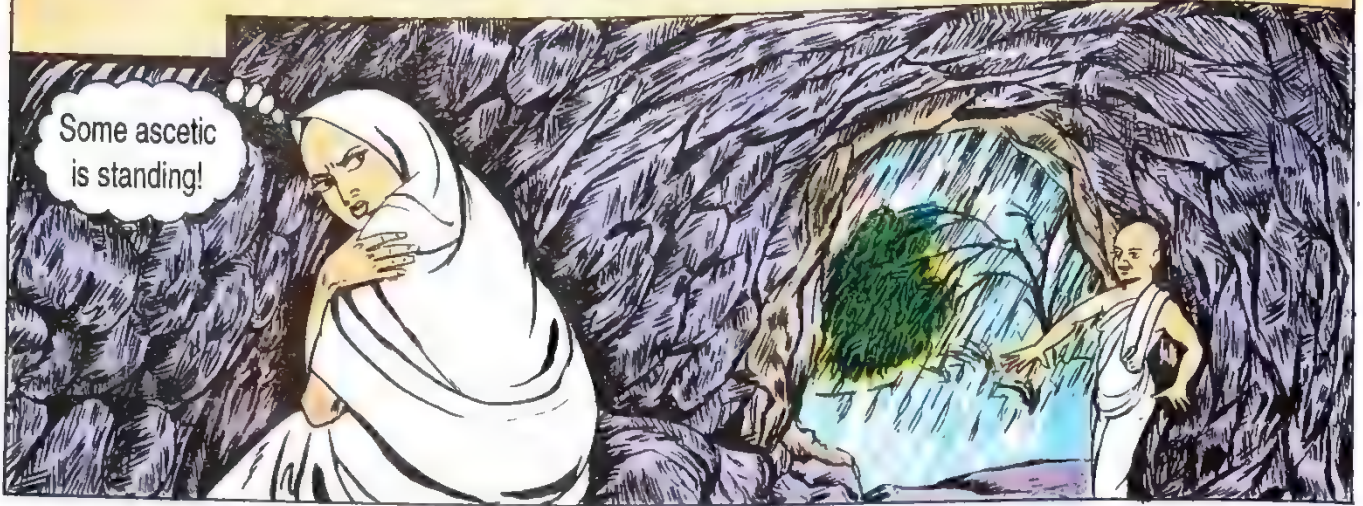
The ascetics scattered in search of caves for shelter. Rajimati was separated from the group. She saw a cave just ahead of her. She rushed and took shelter into it. The cave was very deep. Rajimati thought—



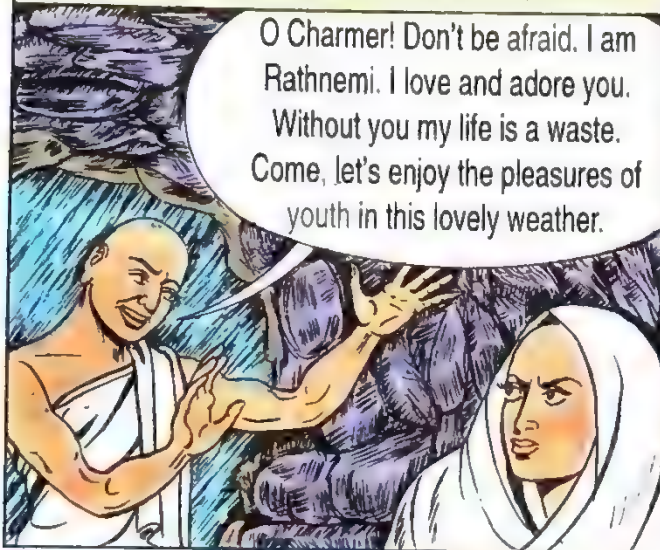
She looked around. It was dark. Rajimati took off her dress and spread it to dry. Deeper in the cave Rathnemi stood in meditation. The thunder disturbed his meditation. He looked at the opening. In the flash of lightening he had a glimpse of half naked Rajimati. His discipline melted and he was consumed by lust.



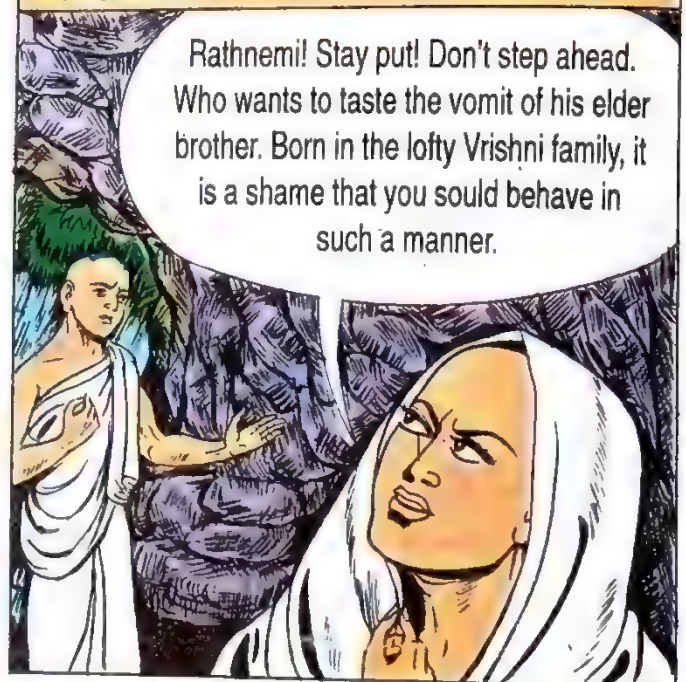
Next flash of lightening and Rajimati also saw the male figure standing in the cave. She at once wrapped herself in the robe, folded her limbs, and like a terrified deer wiggled into a corner.



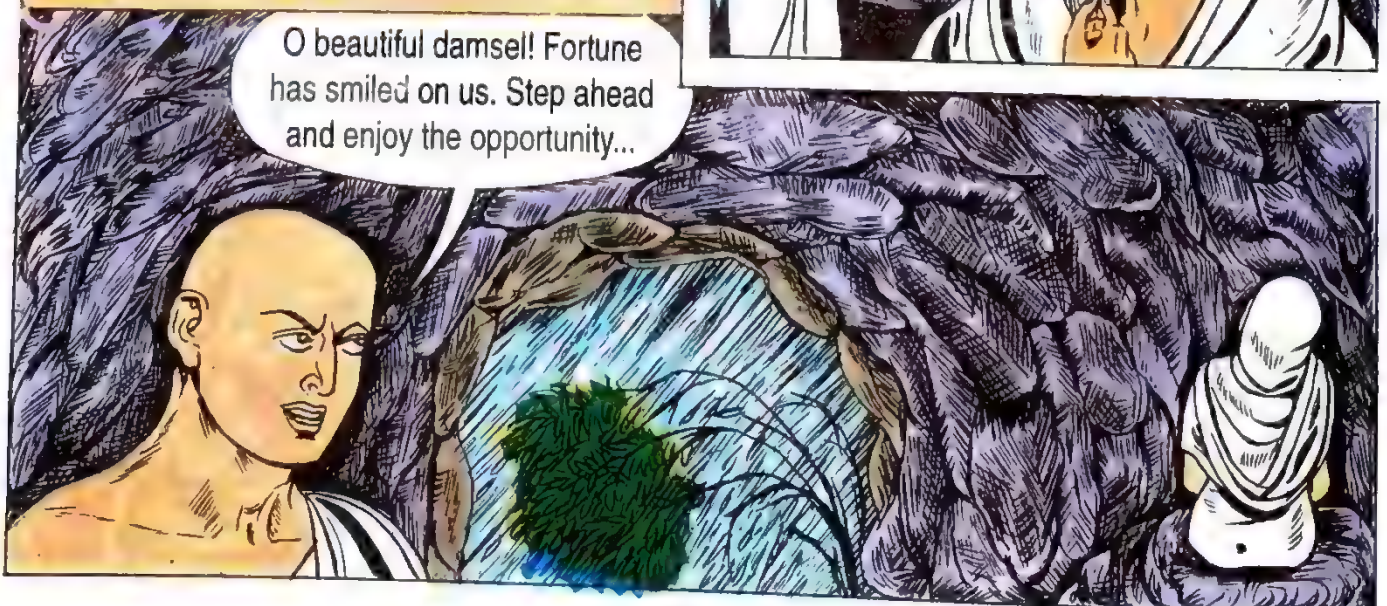
Rathnemi's agitated mind went out of control, he said—



Trying to hide herself, Rajimati uttered in panic—



Rooted at the spot Rathnemi repeated his invitation—



Rajimati repeated—

Please control yourself, your mind...
A snake of Agandhan species chooses to be
consumed in flames and not to suck back the
vomited venom. Be a master of your
senses and save yourself from
this disgrace.....

The soul awakening words of Rajimati jolted Rathnemi. As the blow of lance pacifies a mad elephant, Rathnemi emerged out of his stupor of lust. He shouted—

Curse me!
Curse me!!

And he re-settled into his practices.

By then the rain had stopped. Rajimati came out of the cave and joined the group to proceed towards the goal.

Rathnemi also went to Bhagwan Neminath and submitted—

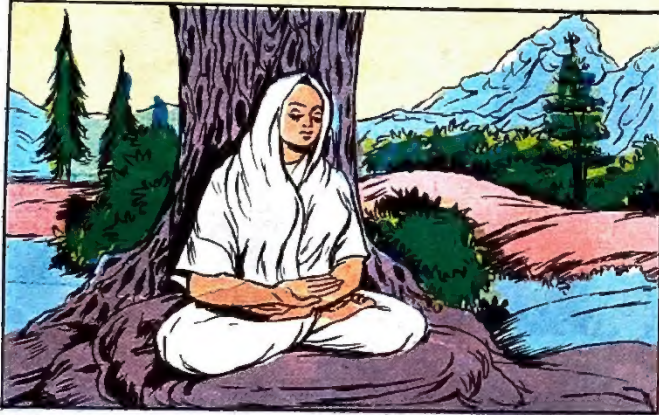
Bhante! Consumed by lust I became
shameless. I caused pain to pious
Rajimati by my rustic and biting words.
Prabhu! Purge me please.

Prabhu said—

Rathnemi! Repentance for one's misdeeds is the best atonement. Do meditation and penance. This will destroy attachment and free you of lust.



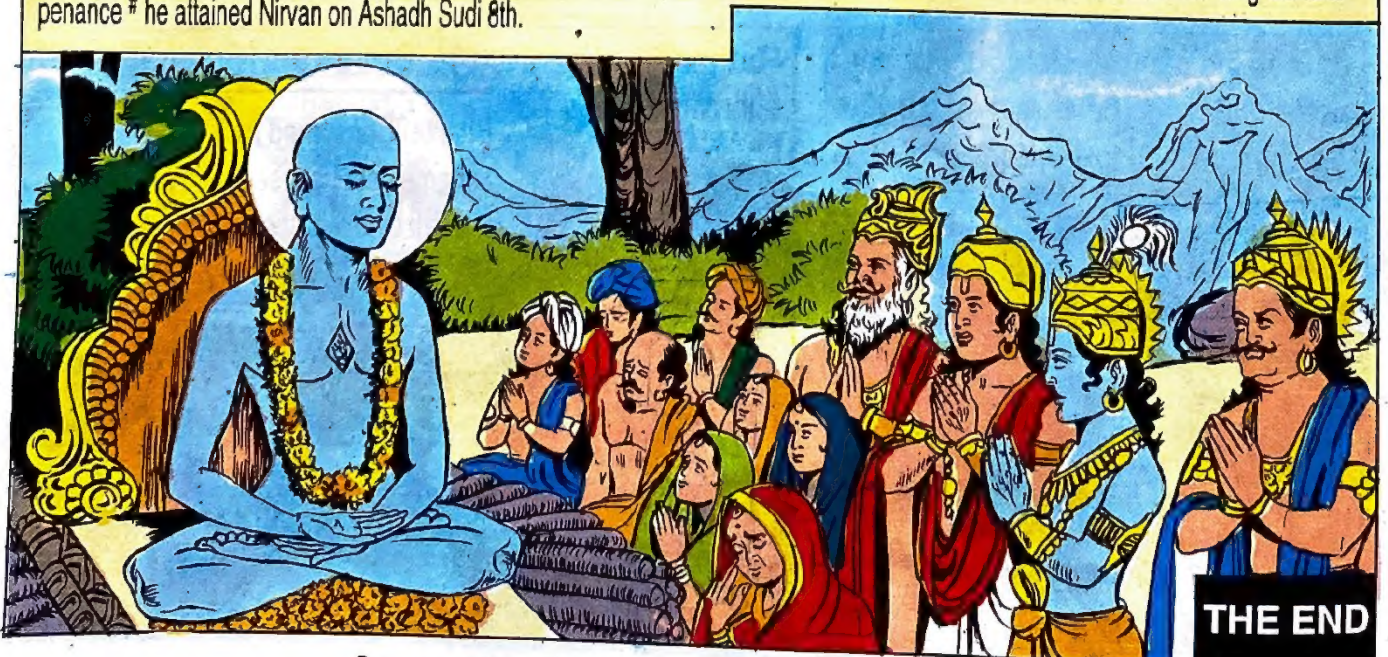
After many years of spiritual practices Rajimati destroyed all her Karmas and attained liberation.



Rathnemi also attained Nirvan after meditation and penance.



Bhagwan Neminath moved about in Saurashtra and other states. In the end he returned to Raivat hill. After a month long ultimate penance # he attained Nirvan on Ashadh Sudi 8th.



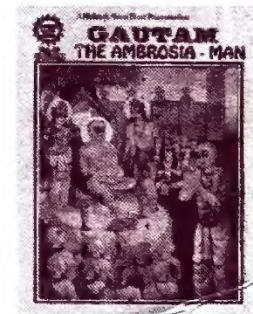
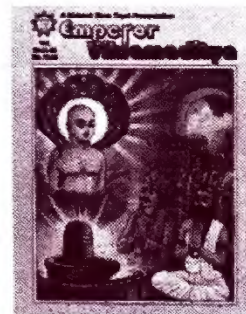
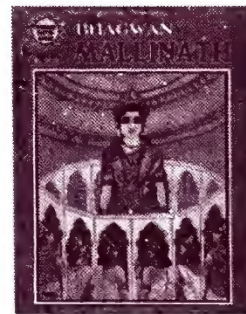
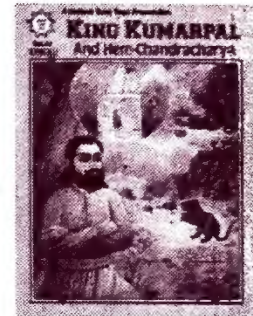
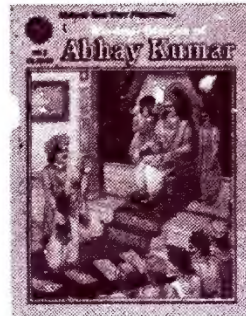
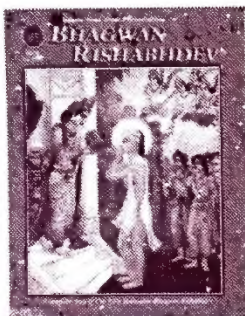
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Propiliation of Dev Harinagamaisi by Srikrishna



Propiliation of Dev Harinagamaisi by Srikrishna

Srikrishna Vasudeva went to oratory (Pausadhasala) observed three day's fast penance and called Dev Harinagamaisi. Harinagamaisi came and remained still in sky. Srikrishna Vasudeva gave words to his desire-Beloved as gods ! My mother wishes that I should have one my uterine younger brother.

Picture taken form Illustrated Antakrd-Dasa Sutra, Editor Shri Amar Muni